

*Citation for published version:*

Diamond, H & Gorrara, C 2012, 'Reframing war: histories and memories of the Second World War in the photography of Julia Pirotte', *Modern and Contemporary France*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 453-471.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2012.720434>

*DOI:*

[10.1080/09639489.2012.720434](https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2012.720434)

*Publication date:*

2012

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

This is an Author's Accepted Manuscript of an article published in [include the complete citation information for the final version of the article as published in the Diamond, H. (2012). Reframing war: Histories and memories of the Second World War in the photography of Julia Pirotte. *Modern and Contemporary France*, 20(4), 453-471, copyright Taylor & Francis, available online at:  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09639489.2012.720434>

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## **Reframing War: Histories and Memories of the Second World War in the Photography of**

**Julia Pirotte by Hanna Diamond and Claire Gorrara**

Photographs of war and political violence operate as some of the most potent visual records via which we make sense of conflict. Photographs can offer the viewer the ‘decisive moment’, as Henri Cartier-Bresson would term it, the tipping point or moment of anticipation when the outcomes of war and conflict are in the process of being decided (Bates 2009, 57), or they can offer the experience of ‘being there’, the eye-witness to events which beckons the viewer to engage with a reality structured and recorded by the camera’s lens as significant and meaningful. For, photography, in common with other means of representing war, always implies a particular point of view and a particular story to tell, one that is informed by the institutions and historical processes of their production and the viewing contexts of their reproduction. The work of Julia Pirotte, a Jewish Polish-Belgian émigré photographer, offers an instructive example of how photographs of the Second World War have been appropriated at different historical junctures to tell very different war stories. An exceptional figure in many respects as a foreigner involved in the popular uprising in Marseille in August and September 1944, her press photographs depicted a ‘national’ epic of French resistance and liberation that have had a rich set of afterlives. Since their initial publication in the left-leaning Marseille press, her photographs have re-emerged in different forms and contexts and been adapted to appeal to diverse audiences across France and Europe. They have helped shape dominant visual representations of French resistance and liberation in French cultural memory, above all in more recent decades, but have attracted remarkably little scholarly attention as an object of study.

This article will begin by proposing a set of critical frames for reading photographs of war and conflict. It will then analyse the visual narratives of the Liberation of Marseille transmitted in Julia Pirotte's press photographs of 1944 and 1945. This was a series of events which she participated in and chronicled as a resister, political activist and photographer and journalist. The article will consider: how is the Liberation of Marseille framed in visual terms at the moment that history is being made? Which set of interpretative paradigms are being invoked to shape a collective memory of the war years at this formative time? Which imagery and symbolism are mobilised to tell a story that feeds into national narratives of war that promote French agency and marginalise the role of Allied (American) forces? It will then proceed to examine the 'afterlives' of such press photographs and the ways in which they have been reframed in more recent decades to tell a different set of war stories centred on the history and memory of the French Resistance. The article will ask: why have Pirotte's press photographs been appropriated as an optic on local – and increasingly international - resistance? What do a changed set of viewing contexts (exhibition and photographic anthology) bring to these visual narratives of resistance and liberation? How might the reframing of Pirotte's photographs be positioned against shifts in the broader memorial landscape of the Second World War in the 1990s and 2000s? By interrogating the reconfigurations of war, resistance and liberation in these photographs, this article makes a case for Pirotte's photographs, and photography more generally, as a privileged means of understanding evolutions in popular memories of the Second World War in France.

*Reading Photography*

Photography has played a vital role in structuring the cultural imaginary of major twentieth-century conflicts, with the work of legendary photojournalists, such as Robert Capa and Don McCullin, establishing influential visual templates of war. For critic Val Williams, such photographs have come to substitute for war itself, clothing it in conventions that are 'dramatic, beguiling and full of aesthetic device' (Williams 1994, 13). Yet, as Roland Barthes contends in his seminal discussion of the 'photographic message', the particularity of the photograph as a form of cultural representation is that it is often read as a 'message sans code' (Barthes 1961, 128), apparently analogous to reality and transparently available as a factual record of what it represents. Rather, for Barthes, the photograph should be viewed as 'la plus sociale des institutions' (Barthes 1961, 138), traversed by historically and cultural embedded codes of perception and bodies of knowledge that rely upon the interpretative skills and understanding of the contemporary reader for intelligibility. These codes relate not only to the choice, composition, editing, lay out and cultural connotations of the individual photographs but also, in the case of the press photograph, to the outlet of publication, the relationship between image and text (caption, by line, news item) and the sequencing (or syntax) of photographs on a given page and across a given publication. In this sense, the 'rhetoric' of the press photograph has much to tell the scholar about the 'ways of seeing' operational at the time of production. They indicate how readers 'read' their present, past and future, dispelling the myth of the supposed objectivity of the photograph as a form of representation.

Understanding the 'photographic message' as a highly mediated and culturally contingent form of representation also brings into sharp focus its value as a means of apprehending the history and memory of conflict. Whilst some critics of photography, such as Susan Sontag,

have charged 'concerned photography' with generating a passive, voyeuristic and largely vicarious attitude to the suffering of others (Sontag 1979, 10), more recent critics have come to re-evaluate photography, above all in a liberal-humanist mode, as a dynamic form of intervention in public and private constructions of war and violence. For Susie Linfield (2010), photographs have played a key role in shaping public consciousness of transformative moments in history, interpolating the reader to reflect critically and politically on what they see and how it is represented. As she argues in her provocative study of photography and political violence, the success of pioneering photojournalists, such as Robert Capa in the 1930s and 1940s, was to use press photographs as a means of raising awareness, connecting readers to the world of those whose cause he espoused, such as Spanish Republicans. For Linfield, Capa's work was avowedly partisan and did not evade the responsibility to take sides and to make statements: 'a political stance didn't occlude vision but instead made it possible; politics was the purpose of his work, not an obstacle to it' (Linfield 2010, 192). As an eyewitness to events, Capa and the social documentary tradition with which he is identified epitomise, therefore, the photographer as an agent and not as a conduit of history. His or her vision of a world at war is framed in a set of social, political and ethical imperatives that focus on social experience and the spirit of human endeavour.

It is at the intersection of these critical perspectives on photography, as cultural practice and as a form of social and political engagement with an external reality, that Julia Pirotte's photographs of the Liberation of Marseille can be situated. Published in the tumultuous days of August and September 1944 in the daily newspapers *La Marseillaise* and *Rouge-Midi* and again in the communist-affiliated magazine *Combattre* in 1945, Pirotte's images were avowedly a connection to the world outside their frames. In terms of viewpoint and political

sensibility, they can be read as drawing heavily on the traditions and iconography of interwar photojournalists, such as Robert Capa and Gerda Taro, and their politically charged narratives of the Spanish Civil War published in French communist and left-leaning weeklies, such as *Regards* and *Vu* in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Yet, they also provide valuable insights into what Barthes describes as ‘une rhétorique d’époque’ (Barthes 1961, 129), the values, associations, subtexts, and bodies of knowledge circulating in 1944 Marseille. In the choice of subjects, composition and use of culturally resonant symbolism, Pirotte’s photographs crystallise a particular memory of the Liberation in the very moment of its making as history. Reading for these culturally mediated views of Liberation in Pirotte’s photographs will allow for reflection on the extent to which this ‘local’ picture was indicative of a broader cultural framing of the Second World War in France at the war’s end.

#### *Photographing Liberation: the ‘national’ picture*

Julia Pirotte’s press photographs of Marseille offered the local reader a vision of Liberation cast as a distinctly French ‘people’s war’. In the photographs published in the communist party organ, *Rouge-Midi*, and the left-leaning *La Marseillaise*, the Liberation is personified in portraits of local people as ordinary heroes who have taken up arms in extraordinary times. The ‘spirit’ of liberation is captured in facial expressions and gestures which emphasise the fraternity and equality of the collective struggle, whilst the subjects themselves are photographed often in movement as if caught in the moment of history and the immediacy of action. Marseille, and by extension France, appears as a community fighting for its liberation rather than as a victim in need of salvation from external agents. The overarching narrative is one, therefore, of agency for local and regional French readers, with ‘the people’ cast as the leading actors in a collective struggle that makes use of the iconography and

symbolism of the French Revolution and Republican traditions. The corollary of such a patriotic narrative is the effective erasure of Allied (largely American) troops from the visual record of the liberation of Marseille, an omission that chimes with broader patterns of French cultural production at this time. In her study of a selection of French, British and American photographs produced in August and September 1944, historian Hilary Footitt surveys two Marseille newspapers and is able to locate only one reference to an American presence in the form of an American star on the side of some of the vehicles in one photograph (*La Marseillaise*, 30 August 1944). With over 15,000 American soldiers reportedly on the ground in the South of France in mid-September 1944, and more anticipated, what the French press photographs of the period from Marseille suggest, according to Footitt, is 'a perception of the Liberation as a national event, from which the "other" was to be largely excluded' (Footitt 2004, 25).

This dual narrative of French agency and American marginalisation in Pirotte's press photographs of 1944 can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the outlet of publication demarcates the photographs as positioned politically within a narrative of liberation that supported communist aspirations and was inherently hostile to images of American power and prestige. As the paper of the French Communist Party, *Rouge-Midi* throughout August and September 1944, lauds the role of Russian prisoners of war in the internal struggle for liberation, and makes much of the heroism of such young men who are seen to incarnate the legendary strength of the Red Army.<sup>ii</sup> Secondly, the press photographs are reflective of Pirotte's own political affiliations as a Polish émigré with communist sympathies who arrived in France via Belgium in the 1930s following persecution in Poland. She was a grassroots resistance activist and liaison agent for the FTP during the war years

and made use of her considerable photographic skills to help forge identity papers to act as a cover for her resistance activities. As a selection of her press photographs of 1944 and 1945 demonstrate, the narrative of liberation with which she would become associated was one which positioned her, like Capa, as a 'visual participant' (Linfield 2010, 190) in war, an agent of memory, rather than the distanced chronicler in events. What we might see as the defining feature of her press photographs of this period, her proximity to events, is realised in the fullness and intensity of her images of everyday people in action. These suggest her commitment to a vision of a freer, fairer and more democratic world for the local community post-Liberation. To return to Roland Barthes' work, these are press photographs, therefore, that work not only in parallel with the written text in an indexical fashion to 'denote' events. They also make inspired use of culturally embedded metaphors, images and associations to 'amplify' written messages about liberation that frame it in a narrative of social and political transformation (Barthes 1961, 134). In order to gain a fine-grained understanding of how these photographs signify liberation and the national community, this article will now look in more detail at three sets of Pirotte's press photographs from 1944 and 1945.

From 25 to 30 August 1944, the newly emergent *La Marseillaise* made extensive use of Julia Pirotte's photographs to represent the liberation of the town, even directly attributing a number of the paper's photographs to her.<sup>iii</sup> The most arresting of these photographs is a sequence of three photographs, published on the front page, on the 25 August, entitled 'La prise de la préfecture de Marseille'. These are the only photographs on the front page and take up nearly a fifth of the column space. The sequence is intended to tell a story, a sort of *tableau vivant*, which highlights key components of a French narrative of liberation. The



three stage tableau begins with two men, holding rifles, a photograph of anticipation with the local uprising against the occupiers in full flow, captioned 'Un FTP armé d'une mitraillette conquise sur l'ennemi' (see Figure 1). It moves to a second photograph of a group of men celebrating the capture of the prefecture, two with a *tricolore* flag held aloft like a canopy, captioned 'les Patriotes manifestent leur joie après la prise de la préfecture'. The sequence ends with a picture of four men lifting ammunition from a lorry, captioned as 'arraché aux Allemands par les FTP'. The photographic effect in all three images is to show liberation in action, the photographer acting as a proxy for the viewer caught up in the excitement of events. The sharply angled composition, slightly blurred focus on the moving flag and the direct look of the subjects at the viewer, all give a sense of 'being there'. Yet the photographs, whilst denoting 'real' events, also construct a vision of liberation that would be mobilised more generally in immediate post-war *résistancialiste* narratives of national valour. This is a 'bloodless' insurrection, with no visual evidence of human casualties and devoid of either the perpetrator (German or French collaborators) or the external liberator (American). In addition, this is a resolutely masculine representation of French agency, with the young and middle-aged male subjects associated with key symbolic objects – the rifle, ammunition and the flag – that connote virility, military prowess and victory (Kelly, 2004). Here, the humiliations of occupation by German forces are obliterated in images of resurgent French manhood, identified as FTP (Francs tireurs et partisans) volunteers by the captions and thereby promoting the actions of communist-led local groupings. Indeed, the written text surrounding these photographs 'amplifies' the message of French male agency. Above, this photographic triptych is an article headed 'L'Action des F.F.I. pour la Libération de Paris', affirming French victory, whilst the far smaller typescript adjacent is grammatically telling in its depiction of American action, 'Les Américains auraient atteint la frontière

suisse', doubtful as to the success of the Americans in advancing towards supranational goals.

If Pirotte presents a highly masculine vision of the national community and liberation in the early hours and days of the liberation of Marseille, this has also to be set alongside her commitment to making visible the contribution of women to the collective struggle. This is most pronounced in her photographs published in *Rouge-Midi* from 25 August to 16 September.<sup>iv</sup> The most significant of these are two images of women at war accompanied by a short article written by Pirotte herself, the only article directly attributed to her, entitled 'Le rôle des femmes dans la bataille' (*Rouge-Midi*, 3 September 1944). The photographs and text are illuminating for the ways in which they endorse but also delimit the role of women as agents of revolutionary insurrection.<sup>v</sup> The article, relegated to page four, provides an account of women's contribution to the Resistance. It begins by praising the heroism and sacrifices of women activists: 'Je les ai vues au travail, dans l'illégalité ces centaines de femmes, dans les transports d'armes, dans les renseignements, fabriquant des pièces d'identité' and underscores how such women ran the same risks as their male counterparts: 'fusillées, étranglées ou battues jusqu'à la mort' (*Rouge-Midi*, 25 August 1944, 4). These actions are set alongside more traditional sex-role stereotyping of women's resistance as providing the support services (nursing, cooking and childcare) that sustained activism. This 'domestication' of women's contribution to resistance and liberation is echoed in the photographs to accompany the article. The photograph on page four shows women distributing clothes to children, whilst the front page photograph co-opts Revolutionary and Republican imagery to celebrate women activism (see Figure 2). It shows a woman, in a tin hat, holding what would appear to be a Red Cross flag. She is advancing in front of a small

group of men and women bringing a wounded volunteer to safety. The unmistakable resonance with Delacroix's 'La Liberté guidant le peuple' (1830) imbues this photograph with an iconic sensibility and casts women as the muses of Revolution.<sup>vi</sup> The caption once again frames these cultural connotations in the language of women's traditional wartime roles, in this instance nursing: 'A Endoume, des femmes marseillaises en première ligne, ramènent un blessé', although the photograph clearly presents both men and women in this role, creating an intriguing asynchronicity of messages. As elsewhere in Pirotte's photographs of women actors of the Liberation in Marseille, progressive narratives of women's equal role in insurrection are subtly mixed with more conventional imagery which undercuts the transgressive charge of imagining women in male-identified roles. In the context of universal suffrage being extended to women in 1944, Pirotte's photographs of August and September 1944 give the contemporary reader an acute sense of the gender tensions in play in 1944 as men and women came to negotiate a reordering of relations and expectations.

One year on from Liberation, Pirotte's press photographs were remobilised in the August 1945 edition of the weekly magazine *Combattre*, produced by the Association des Amis des F.T.P.F. (Franc tireurs et partisans français) and aimed at a local and politically vocal community of former resisters. Devoted to 'L'Insurrection de Marseille', all forty-two of the photographs that make up the twenty-two page edition are by Pirotte. Reading this edition and its photographic narrative from a present-day perspective, it is evident that the 'people's war' narrative of Marseille's liberation of August and September 1944 is being further refined and consolidated. The revolutionary discourse of popular insurrection, the barricades and the grassroots activism of ordinary people is heightened by photographs of

tree-lined boulevards obstructed by wooden carts and planks or photographs of groups of young men on the running board of a car en route for an unspecified mission (*Combattre*, 1945: 8). The new element in this narrative of liberation is the increased visual significance of Marseille, cast as a key protagonist in the struggle for victory. This is signalled in the final photographic sequence of twelve photographs, entitled 'La Cité meurtrie,' where Marseille is represented as war-ravaged but victorious, the city standing in for the trials and tribulations of its people. This convergence of place and people is demonstrated, firstly, by the vision of liberated Marseille as socially vibrant, not the devastated and emptied landscapes that were such a feature of British press photographs of France in the aftermath of the D-Day landings (Footitt 2004, 21) or later British and American filmic treatment of the Liberation of France and Europe.<sup>vii</sup> This vitality is represented in public spaces crowded with people and the intermingling of the local population with liberating forces, the latter all captioned as French. Secondly, the photographs emphasise a re-appropriation of Marseille by the local population. Captions identify local people as 'impatients de reprendre leur habitudes' (*Combattre* 1945: 21) and depict local Marseille landmarks, such as the restaurant Basso or the offices of *Le Figaro*, now under new ownership. Thirdly, the photographs and captions as a sequence demonstrate a progressive movement away from damaged infrastructure towards celebration and victory, as the destruction of bridges and buildings gives way to processions of resistance fighters and enthusiastic crowds who greet the liberators and applaud their military might, symbolised in convoys of trucks and tanks. What is connoted here is liberation as the conquest of 'home' and the return to a way of life, disrupted but not destroyed by a foreign presence that is largely occluded from the visual narrative.

Pirotte's press and magazine photographs give a reader today, therefore, access to a vision of national resistance and liberation which would be reinforced in other forms of cultural production in these early post-war years, such as René Clément's *La Bataille du rail* (1945). This vision would be given official sanction in the pronouncements and commemorative actions of the government and ruling left-wing coalitions and would be exported abroad to stand in for French valour and bravery (Rousso 1990; Kitson 2008). In this narrative, the Liberation is cast as a moment of national unity, a time when men and women seized the opportunity to forge their own destiny. National territory is liberated by the people for the people and the presence of the occupier and the external liberator, above all American forces, are almost completely absent. In addition, the devastation of war is projected onto the urban infrastructure, thereby avoiding the more intractable representation of human casualties, none of which are imagined here. Such a vision of liberation is of course a highly political vision and an aspirational one in tune with the hopes of many on the left in France that the post-war world would herald the reconstruction of a better, more democratic society. Pirotte's photographs suggest that she shared such ideals. Indeed, what these press photographs demonstrate is the role photography played in constructing and disseminating that vision. By giving a human face to liberation at the local level, by offering early readers a form of authentication of that narrative in portraits of ordinary people 'like them', Pirotte's photographs promote a war story of liberation that celebrated the popular struggle. In more recent decades, such photographs have been reframed to tell a different set of war stories centred on the history and memory of the French Resistance and it is to these 'afterlives' that this article will now turn.

*Photographing Resistance and Liberation: the 'afterlives' of Julia Pirotte*

Pirotte's photographs largely disappeared from the French public domain, until the 1990s when they re-emerged to engage a new generation of readers interested in the histories and memories of the Second World War. As those who had lived through the war started to disappear, a sense of urgency motivated curators, writers and filmmakers, as well as historians, to capture and conserve these memories, including those relating to the Resistance. After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the Holocaust gained in prominence as a defining war narrative in French cultural memory and resistance narratives, in the heroic mould, faded and, in some instances, became rewritten as stories of victimhood. During the 1990s, prominent narratives of French resistance activism came under particular scrutiny as a result of revelations over the wartime trajectories of leading political figures, such as François Mitterrand (Péan 1994). At the same time, the trials for crimes against humanity of French men Paul Touvier (1994) and Maurice Papon (1997-8) opened up troubling perspectives on resistance histories and culminated, in the case of resistance spokespeople, Raymond and Lucie Aubrac, in a round table confrontation with historians in 1997 that failed to add productively to the historical record of the Resistance (Diamond and Gorrara 2004). Former resisters found that they were vulnerable to critique and contestation as historians exposed internecine battles and betrayals within the ranks of the Resistance and highlighted the tensions between different political groupings and divergences in their post-war reconstruction of wartime events (Suleiman 2006; Reid 2007). Other accounts shed light on new dimensions of resistance. Most notable was the appearance of Lucie Aubrac's *Ils partiront dans l'ivresse* (1984) which triggered a reassessment of the role played by women in the resistance (Gorrara 1998). In addition, the contribution of the many foreigners who had participated in the Resistance in the FTP-MOI was also being recognised (Courtois, Peschanski and Rayski, 1989). In this context, the

subject matter and socio-political resonance of Pirotte's photographic narratives of Liberation (nation, gender and resistance) meant that her photographs were ripe for reappraisal in a period in which memories of the Second World War and the Resistance were undergoing such change.

This re-emergence of Pirotte's photographs into French public consciousness of the war years was evident at the anniversary commemorations in 1994 and 2004 celebrating the heroism of resistance and liberation. Pirotte's photographs were widely disseminated on both these occasions, above all in the Marseille region, and her photographs were mobilised by curators and commentators to appeal to a public hungry for information about the Resistance, as well as by the surviving wartime generation of communist resisters who saw her work as a way to endorse and verify their own version of events.<sup>viii</sup> Her biographical history as a Jewish émigré photographer gave her work added resonance as a testimony of the war years, investing the portraits of those she photographed with a sense of personal commitment. However, the circulation of her photographs in exhibitions and in book anthologies rather than in the press meant that the ways in which her photographs were viewed and understood was very different from their initial reception in the local press of 1944 and 1945. In particular, her photographs were directed at a narrower, more culturally aware readership drawn to her work either because of her status as a socially committed photographer or as a member of the Resistance, or both. This reframing and sequencing of her photographs in such different contexts had an important bearing on the narratives they represented. This reframing was also inflected by present-day understandings of the legacies of the war in France.

Pirotte's work had started to gain recognition in the 1980s at exhibitions across Europe and in the USA but it was not until 1994, and the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation of France, that her photographs began to be re-appropriated on a local level to portray the activities of resistance groups, as well as the Liberation of Marseille. A number of her original press photographs of the popular insurrection in Marseille appeared as part of an exhibition entitled *Cinquantenaire de la Libération. Des années noires aux années tricolores* held at the Marseille town hall. In the same year, these and others were included in a major retrospective of her work put together by the Museum of Photography in Charleroi, Belgium, and exhibited in the city and at other venues in France and the USA. It is this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue which secured Pirotte's international reputation as a photographer of the Resistance and the Liberation of Marseille.

Much can be said about the reframing of Pirotte's photographs in this photographic retrospective and catalogue and the ways in which narratives both of the Resistance and of the Liberation of Marseille were represented for a later audience. Of particular note is the title of the catalogue 'Une photographe dans la Résistance'. While this seems to suggest to the reader that the main interest of the photographs would be images of the Resistance, of a total of eighty-three photographs, only six are included in a section dedicated to the Resistance with a further thirty-three devoted to the Liberation of Marseille, a surprisingly small percentage given the interpretative frame provided by the exhibition's title. Instead, alongside photographs of Marseille during the war, including images of children in the camp of Bompard just days before their transfer to the nearby internment camp Les Milles and later deportation, are portraits of miners and miners' wives, as well as documentary style renditions of the impoverished inhabitants of Marseille, old and young, living on the margins



of destitution. The exhibition catalogue also makes use of Pirotte's photographs of the devastation she discovered on her return to Poland in 1946, as well as the portrait work she carried out at the Congress of Intellectuals at Woodlaw in 1948. The exhibition catalogue title, therefore, largely misrepresents the actual content of the photographic exhibition, which is predominantly a selection of Pirotte's work that speaks to a social documentary tradition of photography. Rather, this recasting of Pirotte as a 'resistance photographer' sheds light on memories of the Second World War in France of the 1990s in two key respects. It suggests that 'Resistance', as a theme, had become one of the major determinants of war memory and was being used by the curators of the exhibition to repackage Pirotte's work, thereby gaining maximum visibility and public attention for their exhibition. Secondly, it suggests a widening out of the notion of 'Resistance' to incorporate events and positions pre- and post-war in a gesture of recognition that 'resistance' did not begin and end with the war years but formed part of Pirotte's (and others) lifelong commitment to social justice and equality.

In analysing the photographic narrative of the catalogue more closely, it becomes evident that many of the press photographs published in 1944-45 are reproduced here. These images of popular insurrection offered a narrative which chimed well with the narrative offered during the 1994 commemoration celebrations by the local politician Lucien Weygand. In his introduction to the official commemorative material for the Marseille region, he pays homage to the French army, as well as to the Resistance fighters, for the help they provided the Allied armies and he emphasises the need to remember that 'cette Résistance qui a combattu, revendique le pouvoir, représente l'avant garde du peuple français tout entier.'<sup>ix</sup> Pirotte's photographs would certainly have been read by many as

reinforcing this narrative of local resistance activity at a time when there was some anxiety that a regional communist contribution might be overlooked or underestimated. However, a closer look at the Pirotte's resistance photographs reveals that there is a considerable reframing in comparison with original presentation in the Marseille press of 1944 and 1945. Firstly, the prominence accorded the subject of resistance in the collection suggests that Pirotte's photographs are being reframed to tell a story of the Resistance specifically rather than the Liberation of Marseille that was so central to *La Marseillaise* and *Rouge-Midi*. Secondly, the chapter on the Resistance is comprised solely of photographs of members of the *maquis*. Not only is the *maquis* taken to be emblematic of the whole Resistance, but also there are no women present in these images, despite the implicit suggestion in the title of the catalogue: 'une photographe *dans* la Résistance'. Unlike the women-orientated photographic narratives of Liberation available in Pirotte's press photographs of 1944, what is foregrounded in the later incarnation of her work is a very masculine resistance. Indeed, as one French scholar has remarked most of the photographs of resistance in the catalogue depict only men, the majority of women portrayed 'pleurent ou soignent' (Thébaud 1997, 2). Lastly, there is an important modification in the way these male resistance workers are portrayed by comparison with the 1944 press photographs and this is the use of captions. For example, the photograph of two resistance fighters (see Figure 1) is captioned as 'Maquisards arménien et grec, membres de la compagnie Marat FTP-MOI', 21 août 1944' (Musée de la Photographie 1994, 49). This precise identification of the national and ethnic background of those involved, a defining feature of the MOI resistance network (Main d'oeuvre immigrée), was never used in the 1944 press photographs (they were referred to only as FTP). This reframing of resistance coincides with the wider recognition in the 1990s

of the role played by foreigners in the Resistance, particularly in the South of France, as well as of the diversity of those who became involved in the different resistance movements.

In addition to this layering of 'local' resistance narratives, the photographic catalogue and exhibition make much of the life history of Pirotte herself, putting the biography of the photographer at the heart of the reframing enterprise. For the exhibition curator, Jeanne Verhoot in her introductory notes, Pirotte was a 'femme hors du commun qui a vécu de l'intérieur des événements que ses images décrivent' (Musée de la Photographie 1994, 11).

The use of Pirotte's commentaries on her own photographs throughout the catalogue reminds the reader of the connection between the intentions and political agency of the photographer and the events captured in black and white. This imbues the Resistance sequences in particular with an undeniable authenticity for contemporary readers and heightens the impression of being thrust into a dramatic instance that will come to signify history:

Les plus grands jours de ma vie furent ceux de l'insurrection à Marseille. Comme tant d'autres, j'avais des comptes à régler avec les nazis, ... Je me trouvais avec mon groupe de partisans le 21 août 1944 à 15 heures devant la préfecture. Les Allemands en fuite tiraient. Accroupie à l'abri de la roue d'une camionnette, j'ai réalisé ma première photo de la liberté retrouvée (Musée de la Photographie 1994, 46)

Grouped together thematically, the photographs in the catalogue offer a chronological narrative but jump from setting to setting. The placing of wartime photographs in close proximity with one another conveys a sense of a community mobilised in a common action, seeking to defend their own neighbourhood, and the action shots and the portraits of individuals reflect a more contemporary interest in humanising and demystifying the

experiences of resistance and liberation. However, the re-presentation of the photographs in the form of a catalogue rather than the reportage style of the newspaper gives them a more static feel. They have lost something of the immediacy of the 'lived' moment so apparent in their original press usage. Indeed, the desire to reframe the photographs in a way which seeks to promote the 'oeuvre' of Julia Pirotte as a whole occasionally detracts from their clarity and cohesion as a visual narrative of the past. This ambition to present the photograph within a biographical frame is perhaps symptomatic of a contemporary interest in the life histories of resisters but, as a result, the catalogue struggles to balance the personal story of Pirotte, the photographer, with the local and national stories that her photographs reveal.

By the time of the sixtieth anniversary of the Liberation in 2004, the wartime experiences of French people were being interpreted as more multi-layered and more multi-faceted than ever before. It was in this context, that the Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine (BDIC) published an anthology of its own photographic holdings of the period, including extensive use of Julia Pirotte's wartime photographs, in this instance included in glossy hard backed book entitled, *L'Année de la Liberté: Juin 1944 – Juin 1945*. While the emphasis is on the Liberation of France across the whole national territory, the main focus of Pirotte's contribution is again on her photographs of the Resistance. For the editor, Pirotte is once again the 'photographe résistante', presented even more insistently than in the 1994 catalogue. 'L'appareil dans une main, le fusil dans l'autre', the reader learns that: 'très vite elle a saisi l'importance de la photographie comme arme indispensable à son action. Dans ce but précis et non pour faire de l'art' (Abdelouahab and Brisebarre 2004, 185). Importantly, the reader is alerted to the meticulous care Pirotte took in

cataloguing and providing commentaries so that her work would serve to bear witness as accurately as possible to events. Indeed, the reader is left with the impression that Pirotte herself has participated in the reframing of her photographs and that she went to some lengths to ensure that the way they should conform to her own version of events after her death. Clearly, the biographical imperative has increased in importance in this reframing of the past.

Nonetheless, the written account accompanying the visual representation of the Marseille insurrection is not entirely positive, above all in the assessment made of the role played by the local population. It acknowledges that 'l'insurrection populaire qui enflamme la cité a pour effet de gêner l'avancée des forces alliées et de menacer la sécurité de la population' (Abdelouahab and Brisebarre 2004, 87), giving voice to a more nuanced presentation of events which focuses attention on the role of the external liberator, above all Allied forces. Pirotte's present-tense testimony animates the events represented in the photographs and complements the visualisation of how events unfolded: 'Les Allemands sont en fuite. Ils abandonnent leurs camions. On se précipite pour prendre les armes, qui sont aussitôt distribuées pour l'attaque de la préfecture' (Abdelouahab and Brisebarre 2004, 93). Many of these photographs selected are the same as those used in the 1994 catalogue but there are additional images, particularly of the Resistance, and more attention is paid to ensuring that they are clearly contextualised for the reader. Editorial care is taken to construct a causal story whereby one photograph leads on to another, giving sequences a filmic quality. In one series of photographs, a number of *maquisards* prepare, embark upon and carry out sabotage. The entire episode - from the departure of the men from their camp to the laying of the explosives on a railway line with a view to derailment - is documented in considerable

detail that speaks to reader's familiarity with narratives of resistance as heroic armed action.

Yet, while her images appear to provide indisputable 'evidence' of the role played by the male *maquisards*, the editors of the anthology also ensure that the active contribution of women to resistance is recognised more fully than in the 1994 catalogue. In a chapter dedicated to Pirotte's photographs of the battle for Marseille, the photograph captioned in the 1994 catalogue as 'une infirmière des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur' (see Figure 3) is recaptioned as 'une des combattantes des Francs-tireurs et partisans' (Abdelouahab and Brisebarre 2004, 87), reasserting the role of women as combatant rather than carer and nurturer. In a further example of this nuancing of the role of women, the reader learns that the photograph of a funeral, also reproduced in the 1994 catalogue, is that of 'une résistante juive allemande' (Abdelouahab and Brisebarre 2004, 102). Without this specific information which identifies the dead resister as a German-Jewish woman, the assumption is that the resister is a man (somewhat reinforced by the fact that all the mourners are men). This particular attention to the diversity of resistance trajectories - across the boundaries of gender, nation and ethnicity - signals the wider concern of the anthology to reconfigure what and how we understand resistance today. For not only is this anthology more open about the contribution of women to resistance activism than the 1994 catalogue, it also gives greater prominence to Pirotte's Jewishness, a biographical fact used to discuss the important roles undertaken by Jews in the FTP (Abdelouahab and Brisebarre 2004, 102). The commentary here, as elsewhere in the anthology, seeks to reframe the resisters as actors in a struggle played out on an international stage. They are posited as

members of a multi-national clandestine army, an assertion indicative of a broader concern to conceive of the Resistance outside narrowly local or national terms of reference.

In conclusion, the successive reframings of Julia Pirotte's photographs illuminate wider reconfigurations of French war memories over the post-war years. They demonstrate how, at their moment of production, they were already engaged in a very particular and politically inflected construction of liberation and resistance which privileged national war narratives of popular Liberation and French agency. What we might think of as post-war *résistancialiste* myths of resistance activism were actively in place as the war for liberation raged. These photographs confirm how visual materials were central to this broader enterprise of post-war French reconstruction and memorialisation. In more recent decades Pirotte's photographs have been mobilised to tell a different set of war stories, centred on representations of the Resistance. As the war years have receded in time, this Resistance narrative has changed in form and substance in order to accommodate an increasingly internationalist perspective which highlights the diversity of non-French trajectories under occupation, including that of the photographer herself.<sup>x</sup> From Liberation to Resistance and from the national to the international, Pirotte's photographs and their afterlives allow for a more nuanced analysis of evolutions in popular memories of the Second World. Such an analysis incorporates relatively neglected cultural materials, such as photography, or the viewpoints and perspectives of individuals and groupings that have remained on the margins, such as migrant and foreign resisters, and the legacies of the war for such communities.<sup>xi</sup> As Barthes and others have affirmed, photographs more so than many other media of memory, have the capacity to live on in individual and collective memory, precisely because they seem so transparently available to the viewer. Yet, as this article has argued,

press photographs, like those of Pirotte, are traversed by messages that have been activated at different historical junctures in different forms in order to speak to the collective attitudes of the societies that consume them.

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<sup>i</sup> As part of a broader study of war and photography, Brothers (1997) examines press photographs of the Spanish Civil as a valuable resource for understanding more of the national mind set and collective imaginary at their time of production.

<sup>ii</sup> For example, 'L'armée rouge parmi nous', *Rouge-Midi*, 27 August 1944, with a non-attributed photograph of three young men with rifles on the point of engaging the enemy and the caption 'des prisonniers de guerre soviétiques font la guérilla à Marseille'. We have confirmed that the photographer is Julia Pirotte.

<sup>iii</sup> Of the ten photographs published on the front page or page two on these pivotal six days, six are credited to Julia Pirotte, with the remaining four attributed generically to *La Marseillaise*. Of these four photographs, we believe that two others are in fact by Julia Pirotte.

<sup>iv</sup> Photographic images are not attributed to individuals at this period in *Rouge-Midi*; all are captioned as 'photo et cliché R.M'. However, of the forty or so photographs on the front page or page one during this period, we have been able to identify eight of those of Pirotte.

<sup>v</sup> Echoing the work of Caroline Brothers on the French left-wing press and photography of militiawomen during the Spanish Civil War (Brothers, 1997: 76-98), the editorial line of *Rouge-Midi* in the early days of liberation is to approve of women engaged in insurrection action. The edition of 25 August features, on its front page, a young woman in a summer

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dress holding a pistol, with the caption, 'une femme de France au combat', thereby eliding a subject (woman) and object (pistol) that would appear an anathema in the gender politics of then and now.

<sup>vi</sup> Although this painting was inspired by the popular uprising against Charles X in July 1830 rather than the French Revolution, it has come to stand as a symbol of French Republican values and democracy.

<sup>vii</sup> See Rachael Langford's forthcoming article on representations of Second World War in France in a selection of combat films made at the height of French decolonisation, 'Revenants de guerre?' Spectres of Decolonisation in the French Second World War Combat Film', *French Studies* (October, 2013). We would like to thank Rachael Langford for her invaluable comments and advice on earlier drafts of this article.

<sup>viii</sup> In an article entitled 'Reflexions sur une commémoration', the former Lt Colonel R.Cayrol of the FTP-MOI seeks to set the record straight about the role played by the resistance in the liberation of Marseille. No 27 and 28, 1994, *Bulletin de Liaison du Comité des Bouches-du-Rhône de l'Association Nationale des Anciens Combattants de la Résistance*.

<sup>ix</sup> See the Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône brochure for the 1994 Liberation commemorations, Lucien Weygand, Président du Conseil Général du département des Bouches-du-Rhône, the third page (unnumbered).

<sup>x</sup> Pirotte's self-portrait, taken in Marseille 1943, is used to illustrate the cover of one of the edited collections of the series of the major conferences on the Resistance which took place in the 1990s in France (Guillon and Laborie. 1995).

<sup>xi</sup> In recent years, there has been a mainstreaming of representations of foreign or migrant activists in the Resistance in French cultural production. See Didier Daeninckx, *Missak* (2009)

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and the films *L'Armée du crime* (2009, dir. Robert Guédiguian) and *Les Hommes Libres* (2011, dir. Ismael Ferroukhi).

## Films

*L'Armée du Crime*. Directed by Robert Guédiguian. Paris, France: Programme MEDIA de la Communauté Européenne, 2009

*La Bataille du Rail*. Directed by René Clément. Paris, France : Coopérative Générale du Cinéma Français, 1946

*Les Hommes Libres*. Directed by Ismael Ferroukhi. Paris, France: Programme MEDIA de la Communauté Européenne, 2011

*Des Terroristes à la Retraite*. Directed by Mosco Boucault. Paris, France: Ministère de la Culture de la République Française, 1985